

Suffering and Joy. Fraternal Charity¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament,
Nemours, Friday, January 19, 1866

[...]

As soon as we give ourselves to God, we give ourselves to the cross, to sacrifice. It will be death in order to have life. God crucifies us and gives us life. He crucifies the old self who is always with us. Crushed at night, it revives in the morning even stronger than the night before. Our life is a constant struggle, says Job.

Besides, the devil is always around to tempt us, and we also have within us tendencies that draw us down to earth. St. Paul used to say: *What a wretched man I am! Who can free me from this body under the power of death?* (cf. Rm 7:24) We could certainly tell St. Paul, Who are you to complain; you were taken up to the third heaven; you have seen Jesus and you still complain, asking to die! What are you saying? He knew well what he was saying. St. Paul felt himself overwhelmed under the weight of temptations. However he did not destroy himself over this. No, he was killed. However he suffered, and worked like no one else (cf. 1 Cor 15:10). He lived of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 1:21). Such are the saints.

You might say, I'm not asking to die. That's because you are happy at the moment. Just wait, there will be some agonizing moments, some cross. The cross is a daily event. If you have not felt it yet, you will. It would be the last straw for you to reach heaven without suffering. You would be unworthy Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. **In our vocation, life comes through death.** You might say, Even if I suffer, I am happy. Listen to St. Paul: *I suffer as a criminal, even to the point of being thrown into chains* (cf. 2 Tm 2:9), etc.; and he adds: *Despite my many afflictions my joy knows no bounds!* (cf. 2 Cor 7:4) A spiritual man wants to suffer. That is what I wish for you, my good Daughters.

Please be happy in our Lord when you suffer; go with joy to the cross, to our Lord. The martyrs cried, but the grace of our Lord triumphed quickly over their human nature. I don't mean to say that you will not occasionally feel sad; even our Lord in the Garden of Olives prayed sincerely that this chalice might pass him by (cf. Mt 26:39). Yet he accepted the cross; he died by crucifixion. If our Lord had not died, you would not have life! By his death he gave us the Eucharist; he bequeathed himself to us by his death and resurrection. This was his total mission. What I'm saying, my poor Daughters, is that you must find happiness in our Lord.

Do not constantly rely on your emotions – they don't last. This is like looking in a mirror. If we look at ourselves, grace will end quickly. Let us be happy without realizing it, and serve our Lord for himself. Understand clearly that what you are doing is not very much; when you suffer say: This is nothing compared to what our Lord suffered. Do everything for our Lord and realize that what you are doing for him is very little. Do not seek consolation in good works. Say to yourselves, I don't deserve it. It would be like stealing a flower from heaven. We must not think of ourselves as great seraphs or holy martyrs. The reason you serve our Lord is not [only] to be satisfied, happy, and jubilant. That would be the last straw.

Why was the Blessed Virgin so happy throughout her life? I will tell you. When she went to Egypt, the Blessed Virgin did not regret having to leave Nazareth. She was happy to possess our Lord, forgetting

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all the rest. One who is attached to something does not think about self! The Blessed Virgin passed through deserts on her way to Egypt; did that bother her? She possessed our Lord, her treasure and joy; she was happy. There was no desert for her; she possessed Jesus, and that was all she wanted, that was all her happiness, with him she had all riches. Let this be your happiness too, my good Sisters. You possess our Lord, who is here for you. He belongs to you, he exists for you, only for you. The Church gives you a priest to make our Lord present, to serve him on the altar, to bless you. The Church gives him to you, and heaven besides...! What more can you want? You have our Lord on his throne of grace; you have him in his heaven of delight; you possess him. That is reason for jubilation; everything else is nothing. Is the possession of Jesus worthless? The joy of adoring him, serving him for himself – that is real happiness. And the rest...?

If you complain that you are not satisfied and cannot feel our Lord... You have not come here to feel. You want to feel our Lord within you, for example, you want the good that you do for our Lord to come back to you! Impossible...! I'm very sure that I'm pointing to your happiness and joy by telling you, Possess our Lord. I'm sure that all the rest is nothing; it's only something temporary. **Allow the master to work; be happy to possess him and, when you make your adorations, say with joy:** I am going to see our Lord; an hour in heaven; what shall I tell him? I will give myself to him. And be jubilant. At night, what a joy it is for you to hear: *Come, let us adore*. He is waiting, and he cannot remain there without you. Come! What a joy! You are going to spend an hour with the Good Lord, an hour in paradise. Then, my Sisters, you will jump out of bed to come here. Do not worry about being tired. Love gives you the strength. Get up!

Besides, our Lord wanted something else here than in the motherhouse. The other house is a Cenacle, this is Nazareth. Our Lord wanted to be alone with you for a while. He wanted to be at home, to watch over you like children under the wing of their mother, to be alone only with you. How long will this last? As long as he wants...! If you had a beautiful church, Jesus would be sort of divided, manifested. Here, Jesus lives in a family, at Nazareth. How happy the Blessed Virgin was at Nazareth! She possessed him. How happy she was for thirty years! She provided for him, cared for him, and followed him, all the way to Calvary! You are in the first stage of love. Living in our Lord's house, my poor Daughters, you are his family. Be happy.

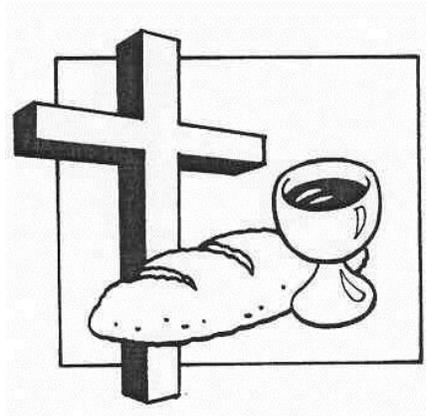
Eucharist is happiness, yes, eternal life, paradise. The Eucharist allows us to see Jesus, to possess him forever. What have we done to deserve so much happiness? Nothing, nothing at all! On the contrary, we did everything we could to distance ourselves from him. Our Lord chose us because he loved us; and love is capricious. Be jubilant, then, with our Lord. Be sure that the devil will not love you. He knows that you love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; and he loves only those who do not love Jesus. The world will not love you either; it cannot love you (cf. Jn 15:19). Be on your guard: you represent the Christians of the early Church, who were all of one heart and one soul (cf. Acts 4:32). Therefore, have filial charity toward your mother, and fraternal charity among yourselves. Remember that the trait of a Servant of the Blessed Sacrament is the sacrifice of her person, which means to have nothing just for yourself. Our Lord alone must have a personality; all for our Lord and nothing for you. What should you be? Annihilated².

Now, I must leave you. **Love one another, then, and see only the good in each other.** Look for only the good in others, only the grace of God. In the dark of night, you will notice how everything in the world is unattractive, the flowers are unattractive and dull. The more a flower is beautiful in the sun, the more unattractive it is at night. If you look at your sisters in the darkness, without the light of charity, you will see everything wrong. But if you judge your sister in the light of charity, then all is well. Look for the good in each other, my poor Daughters. The devil is always seeking a way to penetrate communities through dissension. That is why the Church was not at peace for long.

² To be understood in the sense of Phil. 2: 7 and Gal. 2: 20

My good Daughters, this is how you must be towards our Lord. There are twelve of you; if we include the three sisters, fifteen, add the little one, then sixteen³. This is a small community of sixteen. What should you be? Direct rays, in parallel lines going directly to our Lord. Since you are numerous enough, you form a cluster. Yes, become a flood of light and virtues. Desire nothing else.

I know that you are happy, and that you have only one heart and one soul (cf. Acts 4:32). I was told this, and I bless the Good Lord. Be aware that the devil will try to cause trouble and worry. Let the wind blow around you, but be calm. The master is asleep in the boat; why should you fear? If you start worrying, he will tell you as he did the disciples: *How little faith you have! I am with you and you are afraid...!* (cf. Mt 8:26) Can the devil or the world do anything against the brides of Jesus Christ? Be brave, my good Daughters; be happy and content. The psalmist said: **Happy are those who fear the Lord** (cf. Ps 111:1). What then will be the jubilation of those who love the Good Lord as you love him? How good is the Good Lord! It's true. Say often: Why is he so good to me? Be good then for him. That's the grace I wish for you.



Points for reflection:

What link does the Founder make between suffering and joy? Between the Eucharist and happiness?
What formula does he propose for happiness? What are some of the consequences for community life?

³ Three ladies were associated with the community : Misses Thomas, Larousse, and Sterlingue. A child, Marie-Thérèse, niece of Sr. Benoîte, was also living with the sisters.